

Keep calm, and carry on

Kris King – September 10th 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/09/keep-calm-and-carry-on/>

It was something of a foregone conclusion as to what subject my post was going to be dealing with this week. In the run up to the tenth anniversary of the September 11th 2001 attacks on the USA, internet forums and social media sites are positively alive with the rising tensions, and flaring emotions, of lively, and often heated, discussion. Everyone has an opinion and, given the nature of these events, there was no way I could let this day pass without expressing mine. I wouldn't, in my darkest, most troubling dreams, ever imagine telling America that it should "get over" the events of 9/11, as some heartless bastards out there have done – 3,000 people were murdered that day, and it would be grossly inappropriate to suggest that everyone should simply act like they'd just been dumped by a girlfriend. That said, I do, however, believe firmly that America needs to get *past* 9/11. It needs, at least for its own sake, to significantly recalibrate its sense of proportion.

For ten years now we've been told again and again that we live in a "post-9/11" world, a phrase which, as well as being the most overused of the century thus far, is also the most redundant (we live in a "post-ice age" and "post-last Thursday" world too, but no-one feels the need to go on about it). Most disturbingly, however, it is a phrase that has been insidiously used to silence criticism and justify many things that would otherwise be unjustifiable (I'm thinking specifically of an insane American foreign policy, the repercussions of which will likely be felt for many decades to come). On top of this, we've also been told repeatedly that "the game has changed", and that we need to get used to living by a different set of rules – I wasn't aware we were even *playing* a game, let alone which game it was. Regardless, it's all complete horse-shit anyway.

Since 9/11 America has been very much stuck in a mindset where there is only good or evil, right or wrong, heroes or villains, and it's ideas like these and phrases like those above, and the disingenuous be-suited toss-pieces who peddle them, that are largely responsible. When George W. Bush stated, in his all-too depressingly clueless way, "You're either with us or against us" he was committing a terrible malfeasance against the American public by reinforcing the false perception held by many that we live in a simplistic, black and white world. In this instance a clear line was being drawn, with the terrorists as perpetrators on one side and Americans as victims on the other, and, while no-one would really argue that these labels were being fairly applied there, things are never as straightforward as they seem. There is always a certain amount of grey (or gray, if you like that sort of thing).

Due to a succession of incredibly dodgy foreign policy decisions (many of which carry a distinctively rank "corporate interest" aroma) America has been very busy fucking with other people's countries – economically, politically, or militarily – for over a century; for a start the US has more than 600 military bases in over 40 countries around the world, something which is bound to annoy a fair few people. Like the neighbourhood kid euphemistically referred to by everyone as being "a bit slow" because he never quite learned why it was such a bad idea to keep kicking that throbbing wasp's nest in the garden, there's only so long America can keep pissing off other nations before one of them decides to respond with a vicious retaliatory sting. That's not to say that they *deserved* what happened – no one in their right mind would contemplate such an appalling suggestion – it's more that there are inevitable consequences to one's actions and it's not always those directly responsible that pay the price.

Being the victim, however, is something that America probably does better than almost anyone. They have a fine history of it, dating all the way back to around 1620 and the beginning of the biggest naughty fib the US has ever tricked itself into believing, namely that the pilgrims left England because of religious persecution. The truth, again, is not so simple, as it was somewhat more the case that they wanted to turn England into a puritan nation and England was having none of it. In what has to be the most substantial teenage hissy-fit ever the pilgrims skulked off to America saying, "Fine, I'll get my own place where I can have my own rules!" Since then, Americans have become world champions at claiming victim status – just look at the consummate ease with which personal

responsibility is jettisoned on the average talk show or celebrity interview.

"I'm an alcoholic! I've got a *disease*! I'm a **victim!**" Fuck you, you prick; *cancer* is a disease – you're just a selfish, drunken arsehole who wants sympathy for the shitty decisions you've made. I'm not saying this is exclusive to Americans (of course it isn't), but they are *masters* at it and they are supremely good at taking it far beyond the individual. Based on the reaction to 9/11 (and, again, I'm not saying it wasn't justified because it was – people were murdered, and you are absolutely right to stake your claim to being the victim in this) you get the distinct impression that America felt no-one had ever been a victim of anything before. It was as if terrorism didn't exist until it happened to *them*. It was as if this was the most important thing that ever happened to anyone, and no one had ever been hurt like they were hurt.

And, before you start leaping up and down, please know that I am not *in any way* trying to diminish or show disrespect for either the 3,000 lives lost or the entirely appropriate feeling of having been brutally wounded as a nation, I'm just saying that you need to put it in *perspective*. You need, as I said, to repair your seemingly malfunctioning sense of proportion and stop seeing things as simple black or white because it will, I promise, help make America and the world a far better place to be. It's important to remember the event, and it's important to remember the tragic loss of innocent life, but it's also important to remember not to let this event continue to define you in the way you have allowed it to over the past ten years. Yes, you were the victims of a terrorist attack – but you need to stop thinking of yourselves in that way.

I've not known much tragedy in my life, and in that respect I consider myself incredibly fortunate, but there are a few people among those I've called friends who have experienced real horror, and two in particular spring to mind. Without divulging any details (it's neither my place, nor my right) I shall say simply that, while both have suffered appallingly, they could not be more different. One has refused to allow the traumatic events that have befallen them to define them in any way, instead choosing life and being a happy, well-adjusted individual as a consequence; the other, by contrast, has rooted themselves, and everything they do, firmly in their dark past – as a result, they drift from bad decision to bad decision, unable to see themselves as anything other than a victim, blaming everyone but themselves for the things that happen to them, and being miserable to the point of self-destruction.

Despite the way it often disappoints, or just plain frustrates the living crap out of me, I have always held a special place in my heart for America – they, after all, *went to the fucking moon* (and that counts for a lot in my book). Everything I say here, and everything I've ever said about the US, I do so out of fondness, and out of a lasting hope that it can, one day, live up to its original promise. Given that, America, I'm talking to you ... you need to stop acting like a victim right now. You need to stop lashing out at people you think have wronged you and take the high ground. You need to use tragedies like this as a foundation on which to build a better nation; an industrious, tolerant, and determined nation. You need to tell the world that, if they hurt you, you're going to get up, dust yourselves off, and carry on as you were, only with a greater sense of resolve and purpose.

Look at the stark difference between the way America reacts to tragedy and the way Britain does. In America it was as if the world stopped, and everything came to halt – the country shut down, socially, emotionally, and psychologically. In Britain everyone just looked at their watches and wondered how long it was going to be before the mess was cleaned up because their Tube train was "already running 20 minutes late!" That's not to say that one should compare the events of 7/7 and 9/11, the scales are utterly different for a start ... but the British reaction to 7/7 is the same as it's been to every attack we've endured over *hundreds of years*; once the initial horror has passed, and the wounds have been dressed, we get up and carry on. I've never been patriotic at all but I do love how the old World War II morale campaign "Keep Calm and Carry On" has found its way back to public consciousness (and on to mugs and T-shirts).

I'm not trying to say we're better than you for the way we cope with tragedy, not at all, but you need to remember that you're not the only country on earth – there are more than 7 billion of us and you are but a small fraction of that number. You need to remember that you are not the only people to know tragedy; during the blitz in World War II Britain lost more than 3,000 people every two weeks – that's two 9/11s *every month*. You need to remember that this was not the most important thing ever to happen to you (or the world), and neither was it the worst; you have endured far greater tragedy, and achieved things far more deserving of your historical focus and attention. You need to remember *all* lives lost unnecessarily, not just those killed by hateful ideologies. Since 1960 more Americans have died due to fatal nut allergies, lightning strikes, or head-on collisions with deer than

have been killed in terrorist attacks, and I don't see Fox News getting boners over the War On Bambi, the War On Weather, or the War On Salted Snack Treats.

You need to remember that every time someone invokes and plays on the tragedy of that day they're doing you a massive disservice, like the "helpful friend" who is constantly discouraging a rape victim from leading a normal life by reminding them that the last time they went out they got raped. You need to remember that going "full retribution" on the perceived perpetrators exacerbates the problem, with more innocents getting caught in the crossfire. The people of Afghanistan and Iraq are as much victims of these disgusting purveyors of misery as you were (although Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11), and having made them collateral victims of your retaliation you succeed only in continuing the endless cycle of violence. Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other proponents of oppression and fear could be brought to justice by a sustained police investigation; you don't need some "crusade", as George W. Bush insanely described it (and without any historical irony whatsoever).

And, while we're on the subject, you need to remember the religious aspect to these events. Sure there are complex, geopolitical factors involved in the attacks on 9/11, and religion alone cannot shoulder the blame, but you cannot ignore the divisive, hateful dogmatic ideas that lie behind such tragedies. More importantly you need to remember that by turning up the righteous, christian anger, as such a large contingent of the American population has done (driven, of course, by the religious right) you simply fall victim to the same mentality that inspired these horrific events in the first place. Yes, this act was carried out by muslims – but it was not carried out by Islam itself, and people forget that many innocent muslims also died that day (many among the first responders, in fact) alongside all the christians, jews, hindus, atheists, etc.

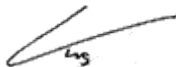
Religion creates worlds built around false dichotomies; everything is black and white, good and evil, right and wrong, "us and them" – never mind that things can't always be expressed in such simple terms. You can't afford to see everything as a clear-cut case of "evil muslims" and "good christians" because history will hand the contradictory evidence to you along with your arse. The crusades, the holocaust, Irish terrorism, the inquisition, and 9/11 **all** have religious motivations behind them, and only two of those feature a headlining appearance by Islam. You need to stop this bullshit outrage over the "Ground Zero Mosque", as if Islam were cementing its victory by planting a flag and rubbing your face in it; the community centre (as it should rightfully be known) can no more be referred to as a mosque than the nearest hospital can be called a church simply by virtue of the fact that it's got a chapel in it.

You need to stop religious zealots from trying to hijack this anniversary as they lobby hard to get the WTC "Girder Cross" made a key part of the 9/11 memorial. First of all this attack was not on christians, or even Americans really, but *humans*, and if you want a cross then you should allow equally-sized, and prominently-placed, symbols of other faiths (and no faith) to go right alongside it. Second, it isn't even symbolic of anything – two intersecting pieces of metal occur all the time in structural engineering, there's nothing special about it. And, third, wasn't the act of hijacking by religiously-inspired ideologies what created this horrific day in the first place? Oh, and since we're talking about hateful ideologies, you need to get [Rep. Sally Kern \(R-tard\) to shut the fuck up](#). As I've pointed out *peanuts* are more dangerous than terrorism, and she's just a disgusting bigot (how does she think gays are more dangerous, by the way? "Suicide bumming"?)

We need to start living in a "post post-9/11" world where these events are our platform for launching a drive towards a more tolerant society, rather than allowing them to be a giant millstone around our necks, dragging us down to the level of violent, hateful savages. We need to stop bigoted zealots dividing us and demanding that we show respect for faiths who squabble and murder while the rest of us try to live our lives in peace. We need to put an end to the vicious wars that were started in direct response to 9/11 and have, ultimately, killed over 500 times the number of people as lost their lives in the attacks. We need to remember that for every life we take, every right we trample, and every individual we oppress in the name of 9/11 we are showing the most heinous disrespect for those who died that day – we are sullyng their memories by reflectively inflicting their fate on to others.

Never forget the events of that day. Never forget the innocent lives lost. Never forget that, yeah you've had better days, but you've had worse ones too. Never forget that others have had it, and continue to have it, so very much worse than you. Never forget that you, and we, often have a hand in hurting others the same way. Never forget the hateful dogmas of religion and politics that create such tragedies, and the vile degenerates who exploit them. Never forget that we are humans, and we are better than this.

But, most of all, never forget the lessons of history ... and never forget to learn from them, and *move on*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive letter 'A' followed by a horizontal line that extends to the right and then curves back down to the left.